

EWIC STATEMENT
January 12, 2024

EWIC Statement on Congressional Border Negotiations:

EWIC Recognizes the Need for Border Security Efforts, Urges Attention to Work Authorization Delay Fixes for Immigrants Legally in the U.S.

The Essential Worker Immigration Coalition (EWIC) welcomes the current discussions on border security and recognizes that this is a necessary step towards addressing the complex challenges at the U.S.-Mexico border and unauthorized immigration. However, we strongly believe that legal immigration reform is equally crucial for strengthening border security and fostering economic prosperity.

While EWIC supports strong border enforcement, we emphasize that creating legal pathways for essential workers plays a key role in:

- Addressing chronic workforce shortages: Current visa limitations leave businesses across various sectors struggling to meet labor needs. Expanding legal avenues for temporary and skilled workers fills critical gaps, reducing the incentive for unauthorized immigration.
- Enhancing border security: Legal workers contribute to a more organized and efficient immigration system, allowing authorities to focus on deterring and apprehending those entering illegally.
- Boosting the economy: Filling essential worker positions fuels economic growth and innovation, strengthening U.S. competitiveness globally.

Therefore, EWIC urges Congress to consider the following in the current negotiations:

- Prioritize reduction of work authorization delays: Address administrative backlogs and expedite processing times for work authorization documents for immigrants legally residing in the U.S., such as S. 255/H.R. 1325, the Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act. This prevents unnecessary hardships and reduces potential resort to unauthorized work.
- Expand temporary worker visa programs: Create year-round programs tailored to different skill levels and industry needs, ensuring a flexible and responsive legal

immigration system, such as H.R. 3734, the Essential Workers for Economic Advancement Act.

- Streamline the visa application process: Reduce bureaucratic hurdles and simplify procedures for employers and workers, fostering greater utilization of legal channels.

EWIC strongly believes that neglecting legal immigration reform hinders both secure borders and U.S. economic interests. We stand ready to collaborate with the Administration and Congress to develop balanced and commonsense solutions that address our nation's long-standing immigration challenges.

The Essential Worker Immigration Coalition (EWIC) is a coalition of businesses, trade associations, and other organizations from across the industry spectrum concerned with the shortage of both lesser skilled and unskilled ("essential worker") labor. EWIC stands ready to work with the Administration and Congress to push forward on important immigration reform issues.